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SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: PARLIAMENTARY REPORT NOTES INCREASING VIOLENCE,
BETTER TROOPS, UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT IN KANDAHAR

REF: A. OTTAWA 179
[1](#)B. 08 OTTAWA 1496
[1](#)C. 08 OTTAWA 373

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. The government's fourth quarterly report to Parliament on the Canadian mission in Afghanistan cited improvements in Canadian and Afghan combat effectiveness in Kandahar, but noted that progress on key development benchmarks had faced challenges from growing insurgent violence. All Canadian air assets destined for Kandahar are in place. Training and mentoring of police and corrections officers is starting to pay dividends, and the situation should improve as the U.S. deploys more troops and development experts to the region. The government reported incremental progress on Canada's "signature projects," having built five more schools, completed the scoping of the Dahla Dam project, vaccinated hundreds of thousands more children, and supported the registration of additional Kandahari voters during the quarter. The report elicited remarkably little parliamentary, media or public interest in Ottawa. End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) The Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan, chaired by International Trade Minister Stockwell Day, on June 3 delivered to Parliament the fourth quarterly benchmark assessment of the Canadian mission in Kandahar, Afghanistan (ref a reported on the third report), covering the period January - March, 2009. The report cited sustained but uneven progress on Canada's six priority benchmarks, despite an increase in insurgent attacks and IED placements in Kandahar compared to the same three months of 2008. The report emphasized that Canada's capacity-building effort continued to face challenges from assassinations of government officials and other prominent leaders, as well as declines in the percentage of Kandaharis who felt "safe" (29 pct, an all-time low) and who supported the Afghan government during the quarter (down from 81 pct in September to 74 pct in March). The report highlighted improving "rule of law" as a central element of Canada's mission.

[1](#)3. (U) Despite these negative security developments, according to the report, the combat effectiveness and force protection of the Canadian forces improved during the quarter when Canadian air assets, including Chinook medium-to-heavy lift and Griffon attack helicopters as well as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), reached full operational capability. The report welcomed the new U.S. Administration's strategic review and its decision to commit additional armed forces and diplomatic and aid personnel to Kandahar, stressing the need for Canada and the U.S. to collaborate closely across each country's interagency.

Benchmark 1 -- Security

¶4. (U) The Canadian Security Goal for Kandahar is to enable the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to sustain a more secure environment and maintain law and order. Canadian military and police engagement focuses on ensuring that, by 2011, the army (ANA) and the police (ANP) will be able to conduct operations and secure key districts of Kandahar with limited support from ISAF allies.

¶5. (U) During the quarter, there was no further progress on Afghan forces reaching the highest capability milestone - fully capable of near-autonomous operations -- (brigade headquarters and one "kandak") although four other kandaks of the 205 ANA reached the second highest capability milestone. According to the report, "ANA units mentored by Canadians displayed increasing capacity to plan and conduct independent operations, but they usually partner with Canadian or other international forces." It also noted that Brigade commander skills had improved significantly and, for the first time, ANA battalions were able to field artillery, logistics and engineering capabilities.

¶6. (U) The report cited modest, but important progress with the ANP. Canada contributed C\$20 million to fund over 3,000 police and corrections officer salaries for two years, and 25 Canadian civilian police officers began mentoring 230 ANP members who had just completed police training under the U.S.-led Focused District Development (FDD) program. The Canadians also enrolled 250 ANP members in a basic reading skills course developed for the largely illiterate ranks of the ANP, and Canadian trainers and mentors from Corrections Canada began developing courses for mid-level prison

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administrative and resource managers.

Benchmark 2 -- Basic Services

¶7. (U) The Canadian Basic Services Goal for Kandahar is to strengthen Afghan institutional capacity to deliver core services and promote economic growth, enhancing the confidence of Kandaharis in their government.

¶8. (U) The report highlighted Canadian success in building two additional schools, taking the total from three to five built in the past 12 months, and continued construction of another 25. This Canadian "signature project" is on track to build, expand or repair 50 schools in Kandahar by 2011. Additionally, 11,000 Kandaharis (including almost 9,000 women) completed a 10-month literacy course, and 470 adults completed vocational training.

¶9. (U) The report featured progress made on another signature project, the rehabilitation of the Dahla Dam and irrigation system. Crews opened a new bridge needed to carry dam-building machinery, and neared completion of a new access road. In February two Canadian firms conducted an "inception mission" to map the work site, prepared a security plan, and consulted with community leaders in Kandahar and Kabul. Canada expects the C\$50 million project to create up to 10,000 seasonal jobs throughout the local economy by 2011, although no new jobs were created in this winter period (unlike fall 2008, when 142 new jobs were created).

Benchmark 3 -- Humanitarian Assistance

¶10. (U) The Canadian Humanitarian Assistance Goal is to provide assistance for vulnerable people, including refugees, returnees, and internally displaced persons.

¶11. (U) The report focused on progress in the effort to eradicate polio in Kandahar by the end of 2009 under the auspices of the World Health Program, Canada's third signature project. Canada vaccinated 375,000 children in

January and another 350,000 in March (some may have needed more than one vaccination). Despite considerable progress in this area, five new polio cases (three in Kandahar) -- but down from 17 cases nationwide in fall 2008. The new cases were most likely due to the inability of health workers to visit insecure locations in the province and/or to migration of persons from nearby Pakistan, where polio is of growing concern.

¶12. (U) There was little progress on land mine clearance, despite its importance; only an additional 0.44 square kilometers was released to communities during the quarter (compared to 180 square kilometers between March 2007 and March 2008).

Benchmark 4 -- Border

¶13. (U) The Canadian Border Goal is to enhance border security by facilitating a bilateral dialogue between Afghan and Pakistani Authorities.

¶14. (U) After a year of delays, Canada facilitated a meeting of senior Afghan and Pakistan officials at the fifth round of the Dubai Process, where the two delegations adopted an action plan to improve shared border security. The plan contains specific steps and timelines for practical action to improve cooperation at the border on customs, migration, narcotics smuggling, and law enforcement. Canadian officials also completed a major feasibility study for a modern border facility at the Weish-Chaman crossing near Spin Boldak. Canada and the U.S. are now discussing ways to share the costs associated with the project, according to the report.

Benchmark 5 -- National Institutions

¶15. (U) The Canadian National Institutions Goal is to help advance Afghanistan's capacity for democratic governance by contributing to effective, accountable public institutions and electoral processes.

¶16. (U) Canada contributed C\$35 million partially to underwrite the conduct of Afghan elections through 2011, and supported the largely successful ANSF effort in Kandahar to ensure secure voter registration in advance of the August 20 national elections. The report noted an additional 1.2

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million registered voters nationwide during the quarter, for a total of 4.4 million new registration during the entire update of the voter registry (including 300,000 Kandaharis). The report admitted that there may have been some double-counting, along with allegations of fraud and other irregularities.

Benchmark 6 -- Political Reconciliation

¶17. (U) The Political Reconciliation Goal is to facilitate Afghan-led efforts towards political reconciliation.

¶18. (U) The report once again admitted little evidence of any progress toward national reconciliation during the quarter, and noted that persistent insecurity and Afghan preoccupation with the upcoming elections would make progress on this front unlikely during the next two quarters.

¶19. (SBU) Comment: Again, the almost total lack of media, parliamentary, or public interest in the report's assessment of the Afghan mission was remarkable, especially compared to early 2008, when the minority Conservative government risked falling over its handling of Canada's role in Afghanistan. The Canadian public, along with the ruling Conservative Party and the Official Opposition